The way to prosper.

STC 12083

A SERMON,

Preached at S. PAULs Crosse
on Sunday the 27. day of *May*,
being *Trinity Sunday*.

BY

IOHN GORE,

Rector of VVenden-lofts in
ESSEX.

LONDON,
Printed by *R. Badger* for *Thomas Alchorn*,
and are to be sold at his Shop in *Pauls Church-yard* at the Signe of the *Green-Dragon*.
An. Dom. 1632.

HDL

To the Right VVorshipfull

Sr. IOHN MEDE

KNIGHT,

High-Sheriffe *for the County of* ESSEX:

My bountifull and uncorrupted *Patron.*

Right Worshipfull,

MY Talent is little, but my love is great; were I able to expresse it in a greater measure, or in an higher nature, you should be sure to finde it; but I must say with that Father, ἡ γὰρ λόγος ἔχομεν, *&c. All that poore Ministers have* Nazianzen.

to requite their friends withall is Books and Prayers; Accept therefore I beseech you, this weak Sermon (not worth the name of a Book) as a pledge of my humble thankefulnesse: and for my prayers to God on the behalfe of your selfe, your good Lady, and all your loving Children and Family, they shall never be wanting from

Your poore devoted
Chaplain,

IOHN GORE.

A SERMON,

Preached at S. PAULS-Crosse on *Trinity-Sunday*. 1632.

2 CHRON. 26.5.

So long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.

THese words contain the prosperous and successfull estate of King *Uzziah*, during all the time that he served and sought the Lord; but as soon as ever he fell foule with his God, he fell down from his happinesse, and his prosperity went away with his piety: just as you see your Comets and Meteors that hang in the ayre, so long as they keep aloft in the firmament of heaven, they glitter and shine, and make a glorious and celestiall lustre in the eies of all beholders, but if once they decline from that pitch, and fall down to the earth (as many times they doe) they vanish, and dis-appeare, and come to nothing. Such is the case betwixt a man and his God; as long as a man holds in good termes with God, and hath his

converſation in heaven, and ſets his affections upon things above, ſo long God will caſt his favour upon him, and he ſhall ſhine as a light in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe generation; but if once he decline from that pitch, and fall down from a godly converſation, into any earthly, baſe, ungodly diſpoſition, tis a venture but his proſperity will vaniſh away, and his latter end prove worſe than his beginning. Here then is a worthy preſident for all that do deſire to proſper; as I ſuppoſe tis every mans deſire ſo to do: as one ſaid, *Beatus vult homo eſſe, etiam non ſic vivendo ut poſsit eſſe*; Every man would be bleſſed, though he take a courſe to be curſed, every man would go to heaven, though he run the way that leads directly to hell; ſo every man would proſper, though he take a courſe to periſh; but if a man doth deſire true proſperity, that God indeed ſhould proſper him, and give a bleſſing to all that belongs unto him, let him take the courſe that *Uzziah* ſometime did, let him ſeek the Lord, and God will make him to proſper. *So long as he ſought the Lord, God made him to proſper.*

In which words are two generall things to be obſerved;

1. The ground and foundation of true proſperity.
2. The bounds and limitation of it.

Firſt, the ground and foundation of true proſperity, and that is this; It muſt be built and raiſed upon Religion and Piety, God muſt bee ſought unto, ere true proſperity can bee attained to (*Hee ſought the Lord, and God made him to proſper.*)

Secondly, the bounds and limitation of proſperity, how far it reacheth, and how long it laſteth, and that is, onely during the time that he ſerves and ſeeks the Lord, (*So long as he ſought the Lord, ſo long* (& no longer) *God made him to proſper.*)

In the firſt obſerve two particulars, Mans duty, and Gods mercy; Firſt, mans duty to ſeek God; Secondly, Gods mercy to proſper them that ſeek him. Now becauſe the whole hope of our proſperity, and Gods ſucceſſe, depends onely upon our piety in ſeeking of God, I will therefore branch it out into foure circumſtances, which like the foure Rivers of

Eden,

Eden, shall (I trust) water this Garden-plot of God, and make your soules prosper the better.

1. What it is to seek God.
2. How, or in what manner we must seek him.
3. When, or at what time.
4. Where, or in what place we must seek him; I mean so, as that we may prosper by seeking him, for that is the *basis*, the ground-work of my whole Sermon, and shall (by Gods assistance) bee intermingled, and interwoven into every point.

First, what it is to seek God, so as a man may prosper by seeking him. To seek God is nothing else but to seek to please God, to seek to get into favour with God, to seek to get Gods good-will; as the *Sidonians* did with *Herod*, *Act.* 12.20. when they heard that *Herod* was displeased with them, and intended to make warre upon them, they made friendship with *Blastus* the Kings Chamberlain, and sought by all means possible to get into favour with him again; and why? Because (said they) our lands are nourished by the lands of the King. This is our case, our lands, our lives, and all that we have, are nourished and sustained by the King of heaven; and therefore when wee know that he is displeased with us, as justly hee may (for as *David* saith) *Wee provoke him every day*: then let us do as they did, as they made friendship with *Blastus*, so let us make friendship with Iesus Christ, and desire him to help us into Gods favour: And this is that wee call the seeking of God. Now this phrase of seeking God, implies that we are at a losse in this behalfe; and indeed so we are; wee have all of us lost the favour of God by our sinnes, and except wee seek to regain and recover it by our praiers and repentance, wee must never look to prosper. Not prosper, may some say? Why, who prosper more many times than they that have least care, and make least conscience to serve and seek the Lord, they that live altogether by usury and oppression, by bribery and extortion, by fraud and ill dealing, that have not God in all their thoughts, who prosper more than they? I answer to that, and I hope I shall

make it appeare, that a man that seeks not God may thrive in the world, grow rich, and gather goods, and yet not prosper neither. Wealth is one thing, prosperity is another. A man never truly prospers till he come to have *Gaius* his prosperity, whereof you shall read in the third Epistle of S. *Iohn, verse* 2. *I wish above all things that thou maist prosper, even as thy soule prospereth.*

When a mans soule doth prosper in grace and goodnesse inwardly, together as his estate doth prosper in wealth and substance outwardly, that, and none but that is true prosperity. Again, many times it falls out so, and a man in himselfe shall finde it so, that his soule prospers best, when his estate prospers worst. Many a man is like the Pine tree, of whom they write, that if the bark bee pull'd off, it will last a long time, else it rots. So God sees, that many a man if he had his bark upon him, if he had the wealth of the world about him, it would rot him, corrupt him, and make him worse, therefore God is fain to bark him and peele him, to keep him naked, and bare, and poore, that his soule may prosper the better.

Saint *Augustine* gives two reasons why it pleaseth God to withhold outward prosperity from them that inwardly prosper, and to deny outward blessings to those whom hee hath inwardly blest with grace; First, lest wicked people should think, *ob has colendum Deum*, that Gods servants did serve him onely for these things: as the Devil accused *Iob, chap.* 1. 10. Hast thou not considered my servant *Iob* (saith God) how uprightly he walks, and how carefully he serves me? I cannot blame him (quoth Satan) that he serves thee, hee doth it διὰ χρείαν, for his own need, to serve his own turne, for thou makest such an hedge about him, and so fencest him in with thine invincible protection, that none of all his enemies can make the least gap to break in upon him; doe but put forth thy hand (saith the Devil) *manum lasivam*, (hee meanes) thy punishing, thy vindictive revenging hand, and touch him with that (as the Spider toucheth the Bee) touch him to torment him, thou shalt see *Iob* will turn another leafe, and in-

stead

stead of blessing thee, will curse thee to thy face. Yea, dost thou think so (saith God) do thou take him to doe, Ile give thee leave, punish him, afflict him, do any thing to him, spare but his life, and thou shalt see *Iob* will serve me no lesse than he did before; and so it fell out. And the same minde do all Gods faithfull servants beare, prosper or not prosper, thrive or not thrive, rewarded or not rewarded, all is one to them; they will and are resolved to serve and seek the Lord. Secondly, Lest Gods servants should beare a mercinary minde, and serve him onely to make a gain of his service, and so alwaies be looking and lingring after temporall favours; this would turn, *patientiam in avaritiam*, Christian patience into carnall covetousnesse, and make men carnally minded in their spirituall affaires: that were πάθος ἀτιμίας (as the Apostle speaks) an affection of dishonour, and would discover a kinde of baseneſſe in Gods servants, to seek him onely for their own ends; therefore God sees it best in some cases, to restrain prosperity from them that seek him, and that, *alto consilio*, upon deep advice, and great reason, as you see; First, to convince the world of their misopinion of Gods servants. Secondly, to rectifie the affection of them that serve him, that they may learne not to linger after that which God in his wisdome sees good to hold them short of.

But for the prosperity of wicked and ungodly men (to returne to that) of such as seek not the Lord, but rather mingle their wealth with wickednesse, and mix their prosperity with blasphemy, that set their mouth against heaven, and say, as 'tis in *Iob, chap.* 21. 15. *Who is the Almighty that wee should serve him? and what profit should we have if wee pray unto him?* Such men as these, the more outwardly happy they are, the more undoubtedly miserable; that which wee count the felicity and the happinesse of such men, is indeed their ruine and their bane, to thrive well by evill courses. You know what God did to *Hophni* and *Phinehas*, that were as wicked wretches as the earth could beare, God let them alone, let them go on and prosper and domineere over the poore people, sent them no crosse, nor disease, nor judgment to interrupt

rupt them, but let them take their swinge in the very height of their rebellions; Why would God suffer such flagitious villains to have their will without controule? God himselfe is pleased to give an account of it, 1 *Sam.*2.25. *Because* (saith the text) *he would destroy them:* this is the event and issue of a wicked mans prosperity. *I have seen the wicked in great prosperity* (saith *David*, *Psal.*37.35.) *flourishing like a greene bay tree.* Why like a green bay tree, rather than like a green oke-tree, or green apple-tree? I will tell you what I think the reason is; The bay-tree (you know) is green all the winter long, when oke-trees, and apple-trees, and all other far more profitable and fruitfull trees, do wither, decay, and shed their leaves, stand naked and bare, and look as if they were rotten and dead; then doth the bay-tree flourish and looks as fresh and as green as it were in the midst of the spring; when other trees decay, that flourisheth. So fares it with wicked men in such winter-times of the world as we had the last yeare, times of dearth and scarcity, times of want and penury, when many a poore Christian is fain to fast and fare hard, and goe with many a hungry meale to bed. then do you usurers, oppressors, corn-mongers, and such others, those *mercatores humanarum calamitatum* (as *Nazianzen* calls them) those that make merchandise of poore mens miseries, then do they prosper, then do they thrive, then do they flourish like green bay-trees; when others decay, then do they flourish, then is their spring, their flourishing time. (*They flourish like green bay-trees.*)

Well, but what follows in the next verse? *After a while* (saith *David*) *I sought him, but he could not be found*; as if hee had said, I sought on earth in his mansion, in his dwelling-place, thence he was gone, there he was not to bee found; afterward I sought him in heaven, to see if I could finde him there among the Saints and blessed soules above, there he was not to be found: Where was hee then? Verily he was gone downe as is said of *Iudas*, *Act.* 1.25. εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν ἴδιον, gone down to his own place, gone down to hell, there *David* might have found him, but there he sought him not. And this is the miserable end of a wicked mans prosperity.

The

The consideration whereof may be a stay unto us against that great temptation that troubled *Dauid* and *Ieremy*, and still troubles them that are weake in faith, to see the prosperity of wicked men, to see it goe well with them that bee evill, and ill with them that doe well. Dost thou see an ungodly man laden with wealth, honour and ease? dost thou see an hypocrite and an evill liver blest as *Esau* was with the dew of heaven and the fatnesse of the earth? dost thou see a graceless ruffian, one that feasts without feare, drinks without measure, sweares without feeling and lives without God; and yet his body vigorous, his coffers plenteous and his estate prosperous? in a word, dost thou see them prosper that seeke not the Lord, but lie wallowing in that which God abhors, and stand chargeable in their soules with that which separates and divides betwixt a man and his God? why, bee not discomforted at it, be not disquieted with it, doe not fret thy selfe because of the ungodly, neither be thou envious at evill doers; but consider the end of those men, that is the *Apostles* expression, *Iam.* 5.11. You know the patience of *Iob* and what end the Lord made with him, though he curst him at first yet he doubled his blessings upon at the last; so stay till you see what end God will make with these men: surely O God (saith *Dauid*, *Psal.* 73.18.) *Thou hast set these men in slippery places, thou castest them downe into destruction*: a man that stands in *lubrico* in a slippery place, as on ice or glasse, shall have much a-doe to keepe himselfe vpright though no body touch him, but if one should come upon him unawares and give him a sudden justle or a sudden rush, hee hath no power in the world to vphold himselfe but must fall and that dangerously: and this is the case of wicked wealthy men, they thinke they are ἀσαλεῦτοι, unmoveable and fastned on a rocke that never shall be moved; but they are deceived; God that knowes their standing, tels us hee hath set them on slippery places, and it will not be long ere God send some death, some judgement, some evill angell or other to give them such a sudden justle such a sudden rush, that without great mercy on Gods part and great repentance on their owne part, they must

fall

fall inevitably into the pit of hell. And this is the first point I desire to have handled, namely, that the right way for a man to prosper indeed is to serve and seeke the Lord, whosoever prospers without seeking of *God*, his prosperity in this world shall be his ruine and perdition in the world to come.

Secondly, The manner how one that desires to prosper must seeke the Lord, and that is to be done two waies;

1. *Humiliter*,
2. *Veraciter*;

Humbly and unfainedly, sorrowfully and sincerely.

First, *Humiliter*, as the blessed *Virgin Mary* told our SAVIOVR, *Luk.* 2. 48. *Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.* They that would find the Lord must seeke him sorrowing, with sad and heauy hearts, bewailing and bemoaning their own miserable estate through sin before God, as it is said of the Israelites, 1 *Sam.* 7. 2. When the Arke of God was departed from them, they lamented after the Lord: the best and truest lamentation in the world is to lament after the Lord, and a man hath never so just a cause to lament as when the Lord for sinne is departed from him. We read in the story of *Micha*, *Iudg.* 18.24. that when the Souldiers had taken away *Micha's* gods, hee ranne crying and weeping after them, as a man distracted and deprived of all his comfort; the Souldiers hearing him, turn'd backe and ask'd him what he ailed: saith *Micha*, Ye haue taken away my gods, and doe ye aske me what I aile? can ye blame a man that hath lost his gods to bee out of quiet? If *Micha* could find in his heart to lament for the losse of a false god, a god of his owne making, as good gods as that lying at the backe of the fire, warming a man or roasting of meate, (as *Esay* speakes) shall a Christian find in his heart to lose the true God, the God of all comfort and consolation, and that by sinne which is the worst losse of all, and that not by any others taking away (as in *Michas* case) but by his owne act and wilfull default, and not be grieved, nay not moved a-whit; breake none of his sleepe, none of his wonted sports for it, as if hee reckoned GOD as good lost as found? God forbid. Certainly, hee that can

lament

lament for the losse of his goods, and cannot lament for the losse of his God, is worthy to lose both his goods and his God for euer. God was angry with the carnall *Iewes*, *Hos.*7. 14. because they howled upon him for *corne* and *wine*, but did not cry unto him with their hearts; they howled because God had scanted them in his mercy, but they never howled because they had scanted God in their duty; they howled for want of meanes not for want of grace, which is the greatest want of all: observe therefore what a despicable, contemptible terme God gives their prayers, hee cals them *ululatus*, *howlings*, like the *howlings* of a *Dogge* or a *Wolfe*, which is a most harsh unpleasing note in the eare of a man; such are the prayers of obstinate sinners in their extremity to God.

They howled unto me upon their beds, but they did not cry unto mee with their hearts: tis not the howling of the mouth that God regards, but tis the cry of the heart that pierceth heauen and entreth into the eares of Almighty God: you may see it in *Moses*, *Exodus* 14. 10. When the *Israelites* were straighted at the red Sea; hauing the Sea before them, their Enemies behind them, Rocks and Hils of each side of them; the text saith, The people cried, and made a dolefull howling and lamentation to the Lord, *Moses* held his peace; and see the issue: *Populus clamabat & non audiebatur, tacebat Moses & audiebatur*, *The people cried and God heard not them; Moses held his peace and hee was heard* Verse: 15. *Why dost thou cry unto me* (saith God) when he uttered never a word nor made any noise that we can read of, onely his heart cried and that was it that God listned unto: and therefore if any man finde himselfe to bee σκληρόφαλμος of such a hard and dry and brawny temper that he cannot cry with his eies, let him cry with his heart and it is enough. As it is said of our Sauiour, *Heb.*5. 7. That in the daies of his flesh he offered prayers and supplications κραυγαῖς ἰσχύραις, with strong cries and teares vnto God; he did not only cry but he cried strongly, he did even straine himselfe in his praiers with the greatest vehemency that possibly he could; it is not a faint and feeble cry, but it is a strong and hearty cry that wakens the Lord to listen to us, as the *Dis-*

ciples awaked our SAVIOVR when he slept in the ship, *Mat.* 8. If a mother heare her child cry out right, cry heartily and strongly, what-ever she is a doing she will lay it aside and run to still her child: God is more compassionate and tender over his children than any earthly mother over hers, if he doe but heare vs cry heartily, cry in good earnest, hee hath not the power to containe himselfe but will arise and have mercy on us; that is the reason our praiers want successe, because they want heart, their blessing is according to their vigor. You will say it were a good comfort for a man thus to cry and lament and make his moane to God in this sad and sorrowfull manner, if a man were but sure to prosper ever the better: for that I refer you to an instance in Scripture, 1 *Sam.* 1. 9. 10. In the 1 of *Chro.* 4. 9, 10. It is said of *Iabez* who was a man of sorrow, that he was more honorable than al his brethren, *God* prospered him and blessed him more than al the rest; how came that to passe? see *Ver.* 10. *And Iabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest blesse me indeed, and inlarge my coast, and that thy hand might be with mee and that thou wouldest keepe me from evill, that it may not grieve me*, and (saith the text) *God granted him that which he requested:* that is, granted him prosperity, granted him a prosperous and happy life; there is the fruit of godly sorrow. A sorrowfull man (as *Iabez* was) when he praieth in good earnest, that God would blesse him indeed, and be with him in all his waies, such an one shall bee sure to prosper in his suite, and shall undoubtedly receive either what he doth aske or what hee should aske: hee then that desires to prosper let him seeke the Lord this way *dolenter sorrowfully.*

2 *Veraciter, truly, sincerely*, and with all his heart, *Deut.* 4. 29. *If thou seeke the Lord thy God thou shalt finde him, if thou seeke him with all thy heart.* He that would find God must seeke him entirely, unfainedly, not by halves but with his whole hart, because God though he love *cor contritum, a broken heart*, a heart rent and torne with griefe and godly sorrow for sin, yet hee cannot abide *cor divisum, a cloven heart*, a heart parted and divided within it selfe, which makes a man to be (as S.

Iames

Iames cals him) ἀνὴρ δίψυχος, a double-minded man; so wee translate it, but the word signifies a man with two soules or with two minds; such a man must never looke to prosper by his seeking of God. I will give you an instance in 1 or 2, 1 *Chron.* 10. the two ast verses, it is said, that *Saul* died for the sinne that hee sinn'd against the Lord: what was that? one was for sparing *Agag* and the *Amalekites* cattell, pretending devotion when he did it for gaine; but the maine sinne was this, that he sought to the witch and sought not to the Lord, therefore the Lord slew him. Some man may say, did not *Saul* seeke to the Lord? that he did, looke into 1 *Sam.* 28.6. You shall see that *Saul* tried all waies to seeke the Lord, and the Lord would not be found of him nor answer him, neither by Dreames, nor by Vrim, nor by Prophets: how then can this hold good, that *Saul* should die for not seeking of God, when he sought him and God would not answer him? the best answer that I can give is this, *Non videtur fieri quod non legitimè fit*, that which is not done rightly and sincerely as it ought to be done is counted as not done in the sight of *God*; *Sauls* seeking of God was counted as no seeking of God, because he sought him not sincerely as he ought to seeke him. You may see the like in another kinde, 2 *Reg.* 17.32,33. it is said of the *Samaritan-Assyrians* that mongrel brood, which were transplanted out of *Assyria* into *Samaria*, *that they feared the* LORD, *and served their owne gods also*, and the next verse saith, *they feared not the Lord at all*; how can these things concurre? one verse saith, they did feare God, another saith, they did not feare him. *Answ.* Their feare of God is counted as no feare of God, because it was no sincere feare of *God*: had they truly feared God they should never have need to feare their owne Idols, for he that truly feareth God hath his blessing, that he shall need feare nothing else but God in this service of God; as contrarily, hee that feares not God hath this curse, that God will give him such a trembling heart that hee shall feare every thing but GOD, idols and divels and all, as those people did, and therefore was their feare of God counted as no feare of God, because no sincere feare; as *Sauls*

seeking is counted as no seeking because it was no sincere seeking of GOD.

By this you see that lip-labour is but lost labour, and lame prayers are but lost prayers in the sight of God: the *Apostle* gives us a caveat, 2 *Ioh.* 8. to take heed that we lose not the things we have wrought; a man were better lose any thing that he hath wrought, than lose his prayers for want of true devotion: *Labia dolosa si in sermonibus sint, saltem in orationibus non sint*, deceitfull lips and a double tongue if they be found in our other speeches let them not be found in our prayers in any case (saith S. *August.*) God forbid that a Christian should double and dissemble with God and the world in his devotions; he that doth so let him never looke to prosper. *Salomon* speakes it peremptorily, *Prov.* 28. 13. *He that hideth his sinnes shall not prosper*: that is, as we may apply it to our purpose, he that makes religion a cloake to cover and colour his deceit, he that makes devotion a veile to hide his sinnes, such an one shall never prosper; he therefore that desires prosperity, let him seeke the Lord *veraciter, sincerely*.

Thirdly, The time when we must seeke *God*, and that is to be considered in two Circumstances,

Generally and
Particularly.

First, Generally; *Hee that desires to prosper must seeke God at all times*. As wee say, *Nullum tempus occurrit Regi*; so no time comes amisse to *God*, morning or evening, midday or midnight, all times are alike for that matter, a man can never come unseasonably with a suit to *God*. *Exod.* 18. *Moses* sate from morning till night to heare the causes of the people, but he grew weary of it, and was faine to give it over; but there is one above, Iesus Christ the righteous that sits continually ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλοσύνης, *Heb.* 1. on the right hand of majesty on high to heare the causes and complaints of his poore people, and to receive and present our petitions to the divine Majesty and is never weary of it, come when we will he is at leasure to heare us. It is a pretty observation that S. *Augustine* makes out of the parable proposed by our Saviour *Luk.* 11. Where

hee

hee that knockt at midnight to borrow bread of his neighbour, found all the whole family asleep, onely the master of the house was awake, and he answered, and opened, and gave him that he craved, though it was at an unseasonable time; *Nullus de janitoribus respondit*, none of all the porters, none of all the servants, none of all the children made him any answer, they were all asleep, onely the master was awake, and heard him when he called. Just so it fares with us when we knock and call at the doore of heaven for any mercy, none of all the Prophets nor Apostles, none of all the blessed Saints departed make us any answer; alas, they heare us not, they sleep in peace and are at rest from their labours, onely God Almighty, who is the master and maker of that blessed family, he, and onely he doth heare and answer, at what time soever we cry unto him; *Hee that keepeth Israel neither slumbreth nor sleepeth*, call when wee will God is alway awake to heare and help: No time unseasonable to seek God.

Secondly, but more particularly, for one that desires to prosper, there is a choice time and season to seek the Lord above all the rest, and that is early in the morning. 'Tis a pretty conjecture that the Hebrews make upon that saying of the Angel to *Iacob*, *Gen.*32.26. *Let me go, for the morning appeareth.* I take it, the true reason was, because *Iacob* should not bee too curious in looking and gazing upon that humane shape, wherein this great Angell CHRIST appeared; for he it was that wrastled with *Iacob*; but their conceit is, that the Angell which wrastled with *Iacob* all night, desired to depart when the morning appeared, because hee was now to go to the rest of the blessed company and quire of Angels to sing their morning-hymne unto God. 'Tis but a conjecture, but we may apply it thus; We all hope to be ἰσάγγελοι, like the Angels in heaven, let us bee like them on earth too, and however we are imployed at other times, when the morning appeares let us hasten to God, and ask him blessing every morning, as our children do us, and no doubt but God will blesse us the better all the day after. *Iob* 8.5,6. *If thou wilt seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty, surely now he will*

he will awake for thee, and make thy habitation prosperous. I make no doubt but a many of you are early risers, that are up before the morning-watch, I say, before the morning-watch, *(i.)* before the day-starre or the Sunne appeare: and 'tis possible for a man to be early up and never the neere, but hee that riseth early to pray and seek the Lord, shall be sure not to lose his labour, for he shall prosper the better all the day, *If thou wilt seek the Lord betimes, &c.* Yea, but ther's a place of Scripture that seems to crosse and contradict it, *Prov.* 1. 28. *They shall seek me early, but they shall not finde me.* Is the Scripture contrary to it selfe? Doth God say in one place, *If yee seek mee early ye shall finde me*; and in another place, *Though you seek me early you shall not finde me?* How shall we know which to beleeue, which to build upon? I answer;

There's a two-fold early, Gods early, and mans early; Gods early is to seek him in the first place, *Ante omnia adoremus Deum* (was the old rule) before we eate or drink, before we work or play, before we do any thing, doe that first; first seek the kingdome of God, and that's Gods early. Mans early is at the beginning of trouble, the beginning of sickneſſe, the beginning of sorrow, and then the wickedst wretch upon earth will seek the Lord, but then perhaps hee shall not finde him; hee that will not seek him in peace, shall hardly finde him in trouble, he that will not seek him in health, shall not easily finde him in sickneſſe, yea, though he seek him early, at the very first, at the very beginning of it, as *Ioab* fled to the Altar in his perplexity, but it saved not his life because he never came at it in his prosperity to offer upon it. So that you see, if wee take mans early to seek God, we may chance to misse him; but if wee take Gods early, wee shall be sure to finde him.

You then that desire to prosper, remember Gods early; the first thing you do in the morning, let it be to seek God, never think your selves dreſt till that be done, let thy soule have a mornings draught as well as thy body, I meane a morning prayer to fence it against the infectious ayre of the world: *Salomon* gives the reason, *Prov.* 27. 1. *For who can tell what a*

day

day may bring forth? 'Tis a Metaphor taken from a wombe, when a woman is in travell, who can tell what she will bring forth till she be delivered, may bee a sonne, may bee a daughter, may be a monster; so when the wombe of the morning is in travell, who can tell what a day it may bring forth, may be *albus*, may be *ater dies*, may be a white, a happy, a comfortable day; may be a black, a dismall, a dolefull day; wee do not know what a day may bring forth, whether judgment or mercy, whether good or bad events; therefore to prevent the worst, 'tis good to make sure work for our own safety, namely to seek the Lord in the morning, and then come what will come, all shall bee for the best, God will turne it all to good, *Omnia cooperantur, &c. Rom.* 8. *All things work together for good to them that love God.*

Hee then that would be prosperous and speed well, let him be religious and pray well, for he that prayes well can never speed amisse: and therefore if you see one that followes his calling, and is not followed with Gods blessing, it may justly be suspected, that such a one *restraineth* prayer from Almighty God, as *Eliphaz* told *Iob* in another case, *Iob* 15. 4. Now 'tis just with God to restrain prosperity from them that restrain their praiers from him, 'tis just with God to withhold his blessing from those that have not the care nor the grace to ask it. So much for the time and order of our seeking the Lord.

Fourthly, where, or in what place wee must seek God. Generally, we are to seek him every where, for God is *omnipresent*, in all places to be found of them that seek him faithfully; as *David* saith, *Psal.* 139. 3. *Thou art about my bed, and about my pathes, and spiest out all my waies.* We little think when we lie down in our beds as a dog lies down in a kennel, without any prayer, any ejaculation, any good motion to Godward, we little think that God is so neere us that he is about our beds, and doth *observare excubias*, watch our watchings, and observe our lying down and our rising up.

Again, when we walk in *Circuitu*, walk the Devils round from one sinne to another, from one vanity to another, from one ill company to another, we little think that God is about

our

our pathes, and spieth out all our waies: but whether wee think it or no, so it is for certain; and therefore to apply it the right way; In what place soever we seek God, in bed or up, within doore or without, in the field or in the road, we shall be sure to finde him to our comfort and protection. But more especially, there is a proper peculiar place appointed for Christians to seek the Lord in, and that is the Church of God, the Sanctuary or house of prayer, there's his dwelling place, and thither must we resort to seek him. We have an expresse law for it, *Deut.* 12.5. *In that place which the Lord your God shall chuse to put his name in, in that his habitation shall ye seek unto him.* Neither was this a law judiciall, or ceremoniall, that bound the Iew only for a time, but morall and perpetuall that bindes the Christian for ever, to seek the Lord where hee is to be found, (*i.*) in his Sanctuary; they that refuse to come there, may justly be termed (as *Esau* was) profane persons, as being *procul à fano*, far from the Sanctuary, and consequently out of Gods protection; for they that are thus out of the one, are out of the other also.

As S. *Austin* notes out of the parable, *Luk.* 10.30. concerning the man that fell among theeves, and was wounded and left halfe dead, 'tis noted of him that he was going down from *Ierusalem* to *Iericho*; from the Church I warrant you: *Ierusalem* was the Church of God, the holy City; *Iericho* was a cursed place, branded with an ancient curse since the daies of *Ioshua*, and thither lay his journey: whereupon S. *Austin* notes, *Si non descendisset, fortasse in latrones non incidisset*, Had he not been descending & going downward from God and from his Church, peradventure he had not fallen into the hands of theeves; God would have protected him, the Lord would have safeguarded and defended him, that no such evill should have betided him; but because he was going from the Church to a cursed place, and like enough about a naughty businesse, therefore God gave him over, and hee fell into the hands of theeves. As many therefore as desire Gods protection and blessing, let them resort to the Church to serve and seek the Lord.

You

You will say, it were a good comfort for a man so to do, if he were but sure to prosper ever the better; but we see many that frequent the Church duely and daily, that yet prosper never the more.

Answ. If it be so, then surely tis to bee feared, that such came not to Church with a true intent to seek God, but either for novelty and fashion sake, or for company to do as others doe, or for some other sinister respect, they do not make it their errand, their aime, and the drift of their soules to seek God; if they did, God would surely prosper them in one kinde or other: you know the place, *Pray for the peace of Ierusalem, they shall prosper that love thee.* That love what? that love *Ierusalem*, that love the Church of God, that love the word of God, that love the Ministers of God, that love the ordinances of God, they shall prosper (saith *David*, *Psal.* 122. 6. 9.) If they do not prosper outwardly, they shall prosper inwardly, if they do not prosper in goods, they shall prosper in grace, and that is the better prosperity by far. I say the better, and I will make it good out of *Heb.* 8. 6. *Iesus Christ is the mediatour of a better covenant, established upon better promises.* The words at the first sight imply, that the covenant of the Gospell is a better covenant than the covenant of the law: and again, that the promises of the Gospell are better promises than the promises of the law: Now, if you look into the old Testament, you shall finde that the promises of the law were most of them, and the main of them, temporall promises, promises of outward prosperity, that if they kept the commandements, and sought the Lord, they should dwell in the good land, the land that flowed with milk and honey, they should have corn, and wine, and oyl in abundance, they should lay up gold as dust, and the gold of *Ophir* as the flints of the river, *Iob* 22. 24. these and the like were the promises of the Law. Now look into the New Testament, and you shall finde the promises of the Gospell are clean of another nature, most of them spirituall promises, promises of the pardon of sinnes, the peace of conscience, the joy in the holy Ghost, and such like: and these, saith the A-

postle, are κρείττονας, better promises than the other.

Hence I gather, that he that in these dayes seeks the face of God in his Church, and is of such a conversation as becometh the Gospell, if he have not temporall prosperity, he shall have that that is better for him, hee shall have the pardon of his sinnes, the favour of his God, the comfort of his conscience, and the salvation of his soul, which are things of greater worth than all the outward happinesse under heaven, and will be a secret stay and comfort to the soule, when all that the earth affords will not yeeld a man one drop of true refreshing.

You know that the Prisoners in the Tower, Noblemen, and great men, and such others, they are in worse estate and condition than the poorest Water-bearer in the City: for why? though they have good diet, good lodging, good attendance, fine roomes, soft beds, curious walks, &c. yet they are *sub ira*, they are under the wrath and displeasure of the King, and look every day when they shall be called out to arraignment, to have sentence passe against them, and execution to be done upon them: Such is the case of a wicked wealthy man, whose sinnes are unpardoned, and whose conscience is unpurged, and whose soule is unreconciled to God, he is in worse estate and condition than the poorest of Gods servants that fare with bread and water: for why? though he have great friends, great meanes, and a great estate, yet hee is, *sub irâ*, under the wrath and displeasure of God, and where-ever he goes, the black cloudes of Gods heavy vengeance hang over his head, ready upon every provocation to drop down upon him. No marvell then that *Salomon* saith, *The righteous man is more excellent than his neighbour*, *Prov.* 12. 26. hee doth not deny but a righteons man may bee poorer than his neighbour, yet hee saith, hee is more excellent, because his excellency is intrinsecall, (*omnis decor ab intus*) the others is but outward and adventitious. Now he that shall count himselfe more excellent than his neighbour, because he excels him in outward things, in wealth and worldly goods, it is but (as one well compares it) as if a mud-wall that the Sunne shines upon, should boast it selfe

it selfe against a wall of marble that stands in the shadow.

What saith a Father, *An ideo Angelus pauper quia non habet jumenta?* Shall we count an Angel to be poore because he hath not herds, and flockes, and droves of cattell as worldly misers have? No, their riches are in another kinde. So shall wee count a Christian poore and base because he wants the wealth of the world? No, they are rich in another kinde; what hee wants outwardly, hee hath it inwardly, what hee wants in means, he hath in grace; though hee be not rich in the purse, he is rich in the faith; though hee have not silver and gold, he hath that which is better than either, hee hath the precious Pearl of Gods grace, which is of more value to inrich the soule, than all the gold and silver in the world.

The Gospell (you know) compares grace to Pearls; now Pearls are of no value to dunghill-Cocks; but to them that know the worth of them, they are the onely riches in the world; and the rather because;

First, they are durable riches, no fire can consume them, no moth can eate them, no rust take hold of them.

Secondly, they are portable riches, a man that hath a thousand pound in Pearls, may carry them all about him, and never clog him, which he could not do if his wealth lay in other things. So here, to one that hath no grace, to a godlesse graceless man, the Pearl of Gods grace is of no value; but to one that knows how to prize it, it exceeds all worldly wealth, as far as gold exceeds dirt, and Pearls exceed pebbles; and the rather, because, first, 'tis durable, it will never decay, nor be utterly lost. Secondly, 'tis portable, it will accompany a man, whersoever he goes he shall carry it ever with him, συνόικον συνόμιλον, the friend of his bosome, the companion of his studie, and a continuall comforter in all adversity; yea, when death it self comes to devest and strip him of all other riches, no death can strip him of that, tis a grace that shall never leave him till it bring him to glory.

Mistake me not (I beseech you) I doe not speake this to any mans prejudice, as if riches and religion, as if goods and grace were ἀσύσατα, incompatible and could not consist nor

ſtand together; but as our Saviour ſaid to the woman, *Luk.* 11. 27. when ſhe cried out. *Bleſſed is the wombe that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee ſucke:* our Saviour denied not that, for that was true alſo & vndeniable, but anſwered her by a corrective compariſon, yea rather *bleſſed are they that heare the word of God and keepe it:* ſo it is a great bleſſing of *God* to have the wealth of the world and to proſper outwardly; but it is a greater bleſſing to have the grace of the Spirit and to proſper inwardly. In regard whereof *Dauid* having praied for many temporall bleſſings in the behalfe of his people, *Pſal.* 144. 12, 13, 14. that their ſonnes might bee tall and hardy, and their daughters faire, their oxen ſtrong to labour, their ſheepe fertile and ruitfull, that there might bee no commotion nor complaining in their ſtreets; at length windeth up all with this *Epiphonema* or Concluſion, Bleſſed bee the people that are in ſuch a caſe; but on the neck of it he comes in with an *Epanorthoma* or Correction of his former ſpeech, eating in and revoking his words, as if he had ſpoken otherwiſe than well, yea rather (ſaith hee) Bleſſed are the people that have the *Lord* for their *God*; as if he had ſaid; that indeed is a bleſſing in ſome kinde, but it is nothing to this bleſſedneſſe, for that is but externall, this is internall, that is but temporall, this eternall. He then that deſires to proſper whether in grace or in goods or in both, let him thus doe; frequent the houſe of God, ſeeke the face of God, reverence the miniſtery of the word, yeeld thy ſelfe to be wrought vpon by the powerfull Goſpell of Ieſus Chriſt, and this (if any thing) will make thee to proſper.

2. Thus you have heard the firſt point handled with the ſeverall circumſtances of it, touching mans duty, *To ſeeke God:* the next is Gods mercy, *To proſper them that ſeeke him.*

God made him to proſper.

God is the Author of all proſperity; as *David* ſpeakes of promotion, it comes neither from the Eaſt, nor from the Weſt from the North nor from the South, but it comes from *God*; ſo doth this, it is obſervable that when *Iſaak* bleſſed *Iacob*, *Gen.* 27. 28. thus he ſaid; *God give thee of the dew of heaven and the*

fatneſſe.

fatnesse of the earth, and plenty of Corne and Wine; after when he came to blesse *Esau*, he gives him in a manner the very same blessing, *Ver.39. Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatnesse of the earth and the dew of heaven from above*; but no mention is made of *God* in *Esau's* blessing as was in *Iacobs*. Doubtlesse this was a presage that *Iacobs* posterity, all true Israelites, should depend upon *God* for these temporall blessings, and acknowledge themselves beholding to *God* for their outward prosperity, and so should not *Esau's* race, I meane the men of this world, of whom *David* saith, *Psal.* 17.14. They have their bellies filled with hid treasure; for it is *absconditum*, it is hid to them, who it is that feeds and filleth their bellies, namely, *God*; they know him not, neither doe they acknowledge his gifts: but we know him and are bound in duty and conscience to acknowledge that wee have nothing but what we have received; no food to nourish us, nor meanes to maintaine us, nor hopes nor helpes to preferre and prosper us but what must come from *God*: *Non nobis Domine, non nobis*, not unto us Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the praise; marke the ingemination, the Prophet teacheth us to pray twice against our owne praise, wee are so apt to praise our selves, so ready to glory in our owne prosperity; but let mee advise you, you that find that the world doth favour you and prosperity begins to come upon you, whom should you thank for it? not thanke your selves, but thanke your *God*; it is he that makes you to prosper.

Observe againe, that it is not barely said, *God* prospered him, but *God* made him to prosper (as it were) in despight of all those that sought and wish'd his undoing. As it is said in another case, *Mat.*5.45. *God makes the Sunne to shine upon the good and upon the bad*; *he makes the raine to fall on the just and the unjust*; it is not said, hee suffers it, but hee makes it, ἀνατέλλει, *facit exoriri*; no doubt there is many a one in the world that is such a *Lucifuga*, a hater of light and lover of darkenes, whose deeds are so evill that the very sun in the heavens is even loth to cast his beames and shine upon him; and there is many a plot of ground that is purchased and possessed

sed by so wicked an owner, that the very clouds of heaven are loth and unwilling to drop their fatnesse upon it, but that God as it were makes them doe it: Hence we see that God hath the disposing of all these temporall blessings; if the Lord undertake to make a man, all the world shall not marre him, we may see it in *Moses, Exod.* 7. 1. *Pharaoh* did what he could to marre *Moses* and to expose him to ruine and obscurity in his very infancy; but GOD that undertooke to make him, never left him, nor gave him over, till hee had made him a god to *Pharaoh*, not a god whom *Pharaoh* should worship, but whom hee should feare and stand in awe of; a god to execute judgments & bring plagues upon him and to remove the same againe. *Hannah* saith in her song, 1 *Sam.* 2.7. *The Lord maketh poore and maketh rich*, it were as easie to GOD to make all rich as to make any poore; againe, it were all one with God to make all poore as to make any rich (for he hath the making of both) but in his providence and wisdome he hath made some of both sorts, that the one might helpe themselves to heaven by supplying and relieving the necessities of the other.

And therfore for our own parts, if we have any making, any promotion or prosperity above our fellows, we must confesse with *David*: *That it is God that hath made us, and not wee our selves*; it is God that hath made us Men, when he might have made us Beasts, it is God that hath made us Christians when he might have made us Infidels; it is God that hath made us rich when hee might have made us poore; in a word, it is God that hath made us to prosper when he might have made us to perish. (*Hee sought the Lord, and God made him to prosper.*)

But that is not all; the maine thing that I observe from hence is, the benefit that ariseth to us by seeking of GOD, namely that it turnes to our owne advantage, our owne profit; God hath onely the glory, but the gaine is wholy ours, for it is a meanes to make us prosper; as *David* speaking of the commandements, *Psal.* 19. saith, that in keeping of them there is great reward; no man shall be a loser by keeping of Gods

Gods commandements, but a gainer, and a great gainer too, for in keeping of them there is great reward; if wee be not rewarded on earth our reward shall be the greater in heaven, *In cœlis reposita est major compensatio* (saith *Calvin*) the greatest reward is reserved in the heavens. Thus saith the Lord that teacheth thee to profit, *Esay* 48. 17. *Oh that thou hadst harkened to my commandements, then had thy prosperity beene as a floud, and thy righteousnesse as the waves of the sea:* thy prosperity should have beene so large and plentifull, that as a floud it should have runne over the bankes, and the reward of thy righteousnesse as the waves of the sea; that is, one reward should follow upon the necke of another, as one wave followes upon the neck of another: so *Deut.* 5. 29. *Oh that there were a heart in this people to love mee, and feare me as they have said, then should it goe well with them and with their children after them*; not that I might be a gainer and you lose, but that you and your children might reape the benefit. So that as our Saviour saith of the *Sabboth*, that it was made for man, not onely for Gods service, but for mans profit: so it is true of every Commandement, it was made for mans, that is, for mans good and benefit; therefore you have it so often repeated in *Deuteronomy*, These are the Commandements that I have given thee for thy wealth and for thy good.

It is a pretty observation of *Cajetan*, upon that saying of God to *Moses*, *Exod.* 34. 1. *Hew thee two Tables, Dolatibi, non mihi, ego enim non indigeo tua dolatione:* Hew to thy selfe, not for me, for I need none of thy hewing, nor yet any of thy tables, it is for thy owne and thy peoples good that I bid thee hew them; so it is for our good that God bids vs seeke him; God hath onely the glory of it, but the benefit is our owne, for it is a meanes to make vs prosper.

Therefore if we love our selves and desire to doe our selves good, let us seeke the Lord. I know, that naturally we all love our selves too much, but spiritually wee all love our selves too little; for he that lives in sinne, he doth not love himselfe, for he goeth the way to undoe himselfe both here and ever, 2 *Chron.* 24. 20. *Why transgresse yee the Commande-*

ment:

ments of the Lord that ye cannot prosper. Wee use to say of one that is of a good nature, but an evill husband, *Hee is no mans foe but his own*, and 'tis true of every one that lives in any known sinne, not grieving for it, not striving against it, not making conscience to reforme it, he is his own foe indeed, for he doth not onely anger God, but hee hinders himselfe that he cannot prosper, *Why transgresse ye the commandement of God that yee cannot prosper?*

The like speech you have in *Ezek.* 18. *Why will you die, O house of Israel*; God doth not say, Why will yee sinne, O house of Israel? but, Why will ye die, O house of Israel; as presupposing they might well know, if they will needs sinne, they must needs die; for death is the wages of sinne, and follows it as the shadow follows the body. The Lord speakes it with indignation, *Why will yee die?* as wondring they should love themselves no better, but even to seek their own death, by rushing into sinne, as a horse rusheth into the battell; that's the expression that God useth (*Ier.* 8. 6.) *They rush into sinne, as a horse rusheth into the battell.* And why as a horse rusheth into the battell, and not as a man rusheth into the battell? I will tell you what I think the reason is; The horse when hee rusheth into the battell, doth not know that those whom he rusheth on be his enemies, that they will hurt, wound, and kill him, but hee rusheth on them without feare or wit, and rusheth upon his own death: so foolish men do not know, at least will not know (*This they willingly know not*, as S. *Peter* speaks) that sinne is such an enemy to them, that it doth hurt, kill, and damne them, thereupon they rush upon sinne without feare, and so runne upon their own destruction.

Therefore 'tis a good meditation of S. *Austin* upon that prayer of *David*, *Deliver me, O Lord, from the evill man. Tu noli tibi esse malus, liberet te Dominus à te, &c.* Be not thou an evill man to thy selfe, pray to God to deliver thee from thy selfe being an evill man, and of an evill man to make thee a good man, that thou maist not hurt thy selfe, and then never feare any hurt that any other evill man can do thee. We say,

Nemo

Nemo laditur nisi à seipso. No man takes any hurt but hee may thank himselfe, his own sinne is the cause of it; were it not for sinne, heaven could have no quarrell against us, hell could have no power over us; our sinnes are they that hurt us, they are those that undoe us.

The Scripture speaks of sinne lying at the doore, *Gen.*4.7. *If thou dost ill, sinne lies at the doore.* Of all doore-keepers in the world, sinne is the worst, for if that lie at the doore it doth a double mischiefe, it keeps Gods blessing out, and it lets Gods judgement in: therefore if you desire to dwell in safety, and to prosper in your family, let not sinne lie at your doore; as long as that lies there, without repentance, you must never look to prosper.

The Scriptures speake of some that are sonnes of *Belial*, and daughters of *Belial*, (the sonnes of *Eli* were sonnes of *Belial*, 1 *Sam.* 2. and 1. *Hannah* saith to *Eli*, *Count not thy hand-maid for a daughter of Belial.*) Now a sonne of *Belial* is taken generally for one exceedingly wicked, the very childe of the Devil, that lives, *absque jugo*, without a yoak, without any feare of God before his eyes; but it seemeth to be derived of (*Beli*) which signifies without, and (*jagual*) which is to be profitable, or to prosper; and so *Belial* noteth such a one as is altogether unprofitable, and which cannot, shall not prosper. If any such be here, or if any of you that be here finde your selves to be such, that you are unprofitable members of the Common-wealth, that you doe, cannot prosper in your course of life, I vvill not say ye are sonnes of *Belial* (what have I to do to judge you?) onely this let me advise you, that you vvould consider vvith your selves vvhat sinne it is that lies at your doores, and keepes Gods blessing out.

Remove but that, drive but that away by a sincere repentance and reformation of life, and then there's hope to prosper. We see it is the nature of a stream, if it be stopt in his course that he cannot make away in his wonted channell, it will turne in upon it selfe and flow back again towards the fountain, and to the place it came from; so when you finde

your selves stopt in your proceedings, that you cannot make a way into the world so prosperously, so succesfully as you desire, then do as the stream doth, remeat, flow back, reflect, recoyle and turn in upon your selves, to see where the fault lies, what sinne is the cause of it (for that's the τὸ κατέχον, the object or bar that hinders good things from us) and when you have turned back into your selves, then turn forward unto your God, desire him to pardon and amend you, and that's the way to prosper.

I have not yet done with this point; I beseech you give me leave, and I beseech God give me grace, that I may apply it severally and effectually to your soules and consciences; for application is the life of all instruction; a thing proved is true to all, but it is good to none but onely to them to whom it is applied. Let me intreat therefore your patient attention yet a little longer, and you shall heare what I have to say unto you, not in any biting or galling manner (I never delighted in that strain,) but in gentlenesse and mildenesse to teach you how to prosper.

First, you that are Tradesmen, Shop-keepers, Handycrafts-men, that have nothing to take to but what your honest labours and endeavours must help you to; do you desire to prosper in your trades and callings, then seek the Lord before you set to work, do as they doe at Sea, that have *oculos ad cœlum, manus ad clavum*, their hand upon the helme, and their eye upon the heaven; so when a mans hand is upon his work, and his heart upon his God, then is his businesse like to prosper. Contrariwise, he that sets to his work before he seekes to his God, takes a preposterous course, and commonly thrives thereafter. You know what *Peter* confest to Christ, *Master, wee have laboured all night and taken nothing*; and no marvell, for Christ was not with him in the Ship; as soon as ever he had gotten Christ, immediately he had good succesſe. Beleeve it, brethren, except Christ be with a man in his Shop, as he was with *Peter* in his Ship, there's no goed to be done in any trade. What's the reason that so many Tradesmen break, and hide their heads, and run away, but because they

have

have not sought the Lord, nor gotten Christ unto them: they first break with God, then break with men; first lose their credits with God, and then 'tis just with *God* they should lose their credits with men: first leave their honesty, then lose their prosperity; if you desire therefore that your dealings should prosper, and your trading hold and thrive, get Christ into your shops and he will bring you in Customers, he will blesse your takings, hee will uphold you that you shall never break: but if yee expell Christ out of your Shops by your wickednesse, as *Peter* out of weaknesse would have had Christ been gone out of his Ship (saying, *Lord, go from me for I am a sinfull man*) then farewell all good fortune, and never looke to prosper.

And if you would have Christ to keep with you, to dwell and make his abode with you, and so to blesse and prosper you, then be sure that you use a good conscience in all your dealings; take heed you do not deal with your Customers, as the Prophet *Amos* complains of the dealers in his time, *Amos* 8. 5. That they made the Epha small, and the Sheckle great; that is, they made the measure little, and the price great: take heed of that, 'tis an abomination to the Lord, and hee that useth it shall never prosper. Remember the saying, *Iob cap.* 8. 5, 6. *Seek the Lord and be upright, and he will make the habitation of thy righteousnesse prosperous.*

2 You that have occasion to travell by land or by water, that have any journey to go that you desire should prosper, then seek to God before you set out of doores, take God along with you, request his company, crave his conduct and guidance: pray as *Eleazar* did, *Gen.* 24. 12. *O Lord God of my master Abraham, I beseech thee send me good speed this day*; and God heard him, and granted his desire, hee sped as well as his heart could wish. If thou wouldst be prosperous and sped well, be religious and pray well; for he that praies well, can never speed ill. In any case go not out of doors without seeking of God, how dost thou know what mischiefe may befall thee in the way, if God be not with thee to protect thee? but if thou hast sought to him, he will be a sunne and a shield

unto thee, *Psal.*84. a Sunne to direct and guide thee, a Shield to defend and save thee from all annoyances that may hurt thee; *He will give his Angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy waies*; in *viis, non in præcipitiis*, in thy wayes wherin thou walkest with God as *Enoch* did; not in thy headlong courses wherein thou runn'st without God, when thou runnest in the Devills way, in the way of wickednesse and vanity, thou art out of Gods protection, and must never look to prosper: (out of Gods waies, and out of Gods protection.) In all thy journies therefore do as *Elcanah* did, 1 *Sam.* 1.19. Hee rose up early in the morning to return to *Ramah*, but he durst not set forward a foot, till hee had worshipped before the Lord: *Moses* would not stirre a foot except Gods presence went with him, *Exod.* 33.15. beare thou that minde, hold thou that godly resolution, and (my life for thine) God will make thy way to prosper.

3. You that are Souldiers and men of warre, if you be commanded to fight the Lords battels in *causâ Christi*, against his and your enemies, and (as *Tertul.* speakes) *cruorem cruore reponere*, to retaliate bloud with bloud, to shed your bloud for Christ that hath shed his bloud for you; doe you desire that your warfare should prosper? then seeke to God before you set upon your enemies; it is God that must cover your heads in the day of battell, it is hee that must defend you from the danger of the enemy. Beleeve, it a man of war without God is but a naked man though in the mid'st of all his harnesse, *Exod.* 32.25. it is said that *Moses* saw the people were naked, after their great sin, how naked? *Non veste, sed gratiâ & præsidio Dei*, they were naked not so much for want of cloaths, armes, as for want of the grace, favour and protection of *God*; and no doubt (as *Ferus* observeth) *Si tunc corruissent hostes*, if their enemies had then fallen upon them, they had most shamefully foiled them. Thus it is still, let a man be never so well cloathed, never so well armed, never so well guarded and weaponed, if he be striipt of Gods protection by sinne, hee lies naked and open to all disasters, and therefore if ever any of you come upon that service, first seeke the Lord and that's the way to prosper.

4. You

4. You that are great projectors and plotters for your advancement in the world, let me onely admonish you in a word; that in all your plots you would begin with the first mover, and seeke to God before you set upon the meanes; for it is a certaine thing, no project can prosper without God: when you have wrought a businesse and ripened it, and (as you thinke) brought it to maturity, if God be not sought unto, he can dash it and blast it in a moment, that it shall prove abortive like the untimely fruit of a woman, *Esay* 8.10. *Take counsell together and it shall be brought to nought, pronounce a decree and it shall not stand, for God is with us.* No good to be done without God. *Hannah* gives this counsell in her song 1 *Sam.* 2.3. *Speake no more presumptuously, let not arrogancy come forth of your mouth, for the Lord is a God of knowledge and by him enterprises are established*; for any man to thinke or say that hee is able of himselfe to bring an enterprize to passe, he speakes presumptuously, he takes more upon him than hee is able to performe; for mortall man hath not the knowledge to looke through a businesse, to see all the circumstances of it, all the wheeles that must concur to accomplish it. The Lord is only a God of knowledge, and by him enterprizes are brought to passe; one thing brought to passe by him, is better than a thousand brought to passe by our selves without him, because his mercy is over all his works; that is (as one well expounds it) as the warmth of a Hen is over all her egges to cherish and to hatch them, so is Gods mercy over all his works, to produce them, so as shall be most for our good; whereas if a man sit brooding over his owne projects, and thinke to hatch and produce them of himselfe without God, they will prove but Cockatrices egges, which when they are broken a serpent appeares, some mischiefe or other to shame and blame themselves. If you desire then that your projects should prosper, and your enterprises succeed and come to good effect, then seeke to God for counsell and direction, begge for the secret guidance of his spirit, and the secret working of his providence, and he shall prosper thy projects and bring thy enterprizes to passe.

5. Last of all, you that are in debt and distresse for want of meanes and maintenance; I shall endeavour to give you counsel from my Text, you know that godlinesse and honesty is not alwaies a defence against debt; grace and goodnesse may keepe a man from unthriftinesse, but it does not ever keepe a man from povertie; so that even the best, the holiest, the honestest men on earth may be in debt and deepe in arrerages, not through any lavishnesse or riot of expence (for Religion teacheth a good man to moderate his hands, and to spend within the proportion and compasse of his estate,) but otherwaies by the inflicting or ordering hand of God upon him to try him. Many waies there bee to bring a man into debt, but there is but one way (that I know) to bring a man out of debt, and that is this that is chalked out here in my text, *To serve and seeke the Lord.* If *God* be truly served, if the *Lord* be sincerely sought unto, let a mans estate be never so poore, his debts never so many, his dangers never so great, *God* will finde a meanes to worke him out: as the *Apostle Peter* saith, 2 *Pet.* 2.9. *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation:* though the godly know not how they should possibly be delivered, yet *God* in his secret wisdome knowes how to deliver them; so *God* knowes how to deliver a poore man out of debt though he himselfe know no evasion, hath no meanes either in his power or in his view; *God* is never at a stand, never at a losse, if we know how to pray, he knowes how to helpe us.

What said the man of *God* to *Amaziah*? 2 *Chron.* 25.9. when he forbad him to take the *Ephramites* into the battell against the *Edomites* because *God* was not with them: *Amaziah* asked him, what then should become of the hundred talents which he had given them for their helpe? Cannot *God*, said the *Prophet* give thee more than this? so say I to him that trembles at the inundation of debt upon him; cannot *God* if he were sought unto give an issue out of this? cannot *God* (I say, if the stumbling-blocke of thy sin were taken out of the way by a sound and serious humiliation,) cannot *God* give thee even more than that thou owest? cannot *God* doe

more

more for thee than thou art aware of? assure thy selfe he can, nay assure thy selfe hee will: Take not my word for it, but take the *Apostles* word, *Phil.* 4. 6. μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε, be nothing carefull (so we translate it) but the word signifies, be not distracted or troubled in minde: and what is there in the world, what worldly thing (I meane) that more distracts and troubles an honest-minded man than the thought and consideration of his debts and dangers: well, but is there no remedy, is there no relieſe for one in such a case? yes, there is one universall remedy for all evils whatsoever, and that is humble praier; that is the harbour we must put into in all our ill weather, and that is it the Apostle directs us unto in the place fore-cited; be carefull for nothing, but in every thing let your request bee made knowne vnto *God* in supplication and prayer and giving of thanks, and the *God* of peace φρουρήσει shall keepe and guard your hearts as Kings are kept and guarded from all annoiances. This doe then, thou that art perplexed and intangled in a labyrinth of debt, that thou canst finde no out-gate, no passage, no way to escape; downe upon thy knees to GOD, τὸ συνειδὸς ἀναπτύξον ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ (as *Chrysostome* speakes) unclaspe thy conscience before GOD lay open thy grievances to him, unload thy cares and wants and feares into the bosome of Iesus Christ; and if any meanes under heaven will ease and helpe thee, this will doe it. Beleeve it brethren, all worldly policies without this are but *Arena sine calce*, sand without lime, they will never hold together when wee have most need of them, but like untempered morter will fall asunder: let earnest prayer be joined with frugality, skill and industry, and then expect with comfort the end that God will give: and this is the way to make a poore man prosper.

I have but one thing more to move you in before I leave this point, and that is this; that you whom God hath already prospered and blest and enabled to doe good, would be pleased and perswaded to give something out of your plenty to the poore and pious uses, according as God hath prospered you; it is the *Apostles* owne word, 1 *Cor.* 16. 2. Hee would

have

have every one lay up in ſtore by him to beſtow on the poore and needy according as God hath proſpered him; for the quantity, God hath left it to every mans conſcience, onely in generall he is directed 2 *Cor.* 9. to doe as God hath proſpered him: wee ſhould doe therefore in this caſe, as the Iewes doe in another caſe, who becauſe they know not the preciſe time when the Sabbath ſhould begin and end; they beginne it an houre the ſooner and end it an houre the later, this they call, *Additionem de prophano ad ſacrum*, an addition from prophaneneſſe to holineſſe. I will not diſpute the lawfulneſſe of that act in particular, but generally in ſuch caſes as this, it is good for every man to do rather with the moſt than with the leaſt: *Quantiſcunque ſumptibus conſtet, lucrum eſt pietatis nomine facere ſumptus.* whatſoever coſt a man is at for pious and charitable uſes, it ſhall be a gaine unto himſelfe. We find 1 *Chron.* 22.14. when *David* had beſtowed all his coſt in preparation for the Temple (a hundred thouſand talen ts of gold, a thouſand thouſand talents of ſilver) thus he expreſt it; *Ecce in paupertate meâ*, this (ſaith he) I have done according to my poverty; as if he had ſaid, if I had beene able to doe more, I would have done more, but this was as much as I could reach to, and this (I truſt) God will accept: ſay not then in thy heart, if I were rich, if I were able I would doe thus and thus, but do as God hath proſpered thee, if thou canſt not do according to thy minde, doe according to thy meanes, and that is all that God requires: we read, *Mat.* 21. when our Saviour came riding to Ieruſalem, ſome ſtrawed their garments in the way, and ſome cut downe bowes and branches: If thou beeſt not able to ſtrew thy garments in the way of Chriſt (that is) to cloath his poore naked members; then cut down bowes and branches at leaſt, ſpeake comfortable words to them, plead for them, and what thou wanteſt in ſubſtance, make up in prayer. You know the poore widdowes caſe in the Goſpell, that put her two mites into the poore mans box; our SAVIOVR CHRIST affirmed that ſhe gave more than all the reſt, becauſe ſhe gave all that ſhe had: which teſtified (as one ſaith) not only her liberality to God, but her

confidence

confidence in God, that shee did verily beleeve though shee left her selfe nothing she should not lacke: whereupon Saint *Augustine* saith, *Divites largiuntur securi de divitiis, pauper securus de Domino*: a rich man gives and feares no want, because he knowes he hath enough at home; a poore man gives and feares as little, because hee knowes hee hath enough above, there is one above will supply his wants.

Beleeve it brethren, he that gives any thing with a true intent to relieve the poore and to maintaine the distressed, shall doe himselfe more good, than hee doth them whom hee releeves; and I will prove it out of *Deut.*15.7.10. *If there bee among you a poore man, one of thy brethren within any of thy gates, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poore brother: but thou shalt surely give him, and thy heart shall not bee grieved when thou giveſt vnto him; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall blesse thee in all thy workes and in all that thou putteſt thy hand unto.* Contrariwise, he that is so gripple, and so base that he will part with nothing to the poore, let him know that in so doing he makes a forfeiture to God of all his goods, and God will be a severe exacter of it at his hands when he comes to judgement.

We have a president for it in the Gospell, of the man that had a talent given him, and did not use it as he ought, there came an extent from God, first upon the talent [*Take away his talent from him*] and then there came an extent upon his person too [*Take away the unprofitable servant, binde him, and cast him into utter darknesse.*] As S. *Peter* told *Simon Magus*, *Thou and thy mony perish together*; it had been happy for him if nothing but his money had perished, but there comes an extent from God against all, He and his mony must perish together. As the Idolater (as one said of *Iulian*) shall burn in hell with that same wood and stone that hee adored and made a god of on earth: So the Vsurer and Money-monger, that hath no goodnesse nor compassion in him, shall burne in hell with the same silver and gold that he made an idoll of here in this world. I will say no more but this, Shew mercy to the poore for Christs sake, and Christ will shew mercie to you for the

poore sake. Do good as God hath prospered you, and then you fulfill the law of Christ.

I have done with the first generall point of my text, namely the ground and foundation of true prosperity, that it must bee raised and built upon religion and piety, God must bee sought unto, ere any true prosperity can bee attained unto. I will dispatch the other part in a word or two, and so conclude. And that is the bounds and limitation of true prosperity, how far it reacheth, and how long it lasteth, and that is onely during the time that a man serves and seeks the Lord. *So long as he sought the Lord* (so long, and no longer,) *God made him to prosper.*

Secondly, *So long.* How long that was you may see in the words before my Text (Hee sought the Lord in the daies of *Zechariah*, who had understanding in the visions of God.) That wise and holy Prophet *Zechariah* was a happy tutor to the minority of King *Vzziah*, and was alwaies at hand to counsell and advise him, to advertise and admonish him in things pertaining to his God and his government and by his godly doctrine, and his holy life to guide and steere him the right way to happinesse: now as long as *Zechariah* lived during all his time he sought the Lord and prospered: but as soone as *Zechariah* was gone and gathered to his fathers, it should seeme that *Vzziah* began to fall away, and his prosperity sunke as fast as his piety: just like the waters of *Noah's* floud, as soone as ever the fountaines and springs began to be stopt, presently the waters began to abate; so when the spring of grace begins to bee stopt up in a mans heart, and damd up with wickednesse and sinne, it is a venture but his prosperity will abate and drie away, and his latter end shall be worse than his beginning. Here then (as in a mappe) we may see and bewaile the miserable downe fall of many Christian soules, who during their minority and younger yeeres, while they live under good Parents, good Tutors and good Governours, they take good courses and keepe themselves in good order, but when ever they come to their owne hand, *Sine cortice natare*, to swimme without a corke, to saile without

out a sterne, and to live without a guide and without a God; they runne many times headlong into such desperat licentious courses, that a man that sees them so bad at the last, would hardly beleeve they had ever beene good at the first. It is a good observation of a late Divine in the daies of Popery and blindnesse, the divell it seemes walked very familiarly amon g them, hence we have so many stories of hagges and fayrie s, and of children taken out of cradles and others laid in their roomes, and those they called changelings: since the light of the Gospell hath shined so cleerely, these divels and fayries have not beene seene amongst us; but still there are changelings too too many in every place. Some the Priests and Iesuites have changed from the true religion to popery; some the world hath changed from good neighbourhood and good hospitality to all manner of baseneſse and misery; some good-fellowship and the alehouse hath changed from temperance and sobriety to prophaneneſse and luxury; too many such changelings there be in the world; God of his mercy change them againe, and transforme them into a better mind, *ut mutati mutatum inveniant* (as Saint *Bernard* speakes) that they being changed in affection to God-ward, may finde God changed in affection to them-ward, to speake after the manner of men; for if you marke the course of the world, observe it where you will, you shall never finde that such kinde of persons doe prosper; as those other changelings never prospered in body, so these never prosper in estate, God gives a secret curse unto them, that nothing that they have shall prosper with them: But they are like a man in a consumption, howsoever he may bolster up himselfe for a time with Physicke and Dyet-drinkes, it will kill him in the end: so he that is in a spirituall *Atrophi*, a spirituall consumption, that is fallen from God, he may goe on and hold out for a time, but it will undoe him in the end. Iust according to the saying of the Prophet *Ionah*, *Chap.* 2. 8. *They that follow after lying vanities forsake their owne mercy*: that is, they wilfully deprive themselves of that mercy and prosperity, which if they had cleaved and stucke unto God, they might have beene as sure

of, as if it had beene their owne to bestow upon themselves, and that was King *Uzziahs* case.

For our selves therefore (to draw to an end) if we desire to goe on and prosper as we have begun, that there may bee no decay, no declining, no abatement, either in our piety or in our prosperity, either in our inward graces or in our outward fortunes; let us labour for two things which King *Uzziah* wanted, sincerity and humility.

First, Labour for sincerity, be the same inwardly to Godward, that you seeme to be outwardly to the world-ward, be like the curtaines of the Tabernacle, which they say were so wrought, that they were on both sides alike; so be you alike on both sides, in heart to the Lord and in life to the world, else there is no hope of continuance; for *nil fictum est diuturnum*, nothing that is counterfeit will last long; counterfeit Pearles and Diamonds may glister and sparkle, and make a faire shew for a time, but their lustre will not last; so where there is only an outward forme of godlinesse and not the inward power of it, it cannot last long. If an apple bee rotten at the core though it have a faire outside, it will not continue so long, but rottennesse will possesse the outside also; for that is the nature of things that are unsound, they stay not there where the rottennesse began, but they putrifie and corrupt more and more: so those that have rotten hearts to Godward, may carry a faire shew for a time, but in the end the curse of God will come upon them; and their very name shall rot, that is, their hypocrisie shall be discovered, and their outside made as rotten as their inside. Beware therefore of hypocrisie and labour for sincerity.

Secondly, Pray for humility, that was another grace that King *Uzziah* wanted; it is said of him, *Verse* 16. of this *Chap.* That God helped him till he was strong, and when hee was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction, this was a lamentable thing, that a man in prosperity should be so swolne with pride that hee should even burst againe; take heed of that you whom God hath exalted above your fellowes; the Giants in old time were the goodliest men in the world,

world, yet they are called in Hebrew *Nephilim*, of *Naphel*, to fall, because as by their pride and presumption they fell from God, so God in his *justice* tumbled them downe, that they fell without recovery into the pit of hell; thus (as the saying is) pride will have a fall, but humility shall have a rise, *Iob* 22. 29. *When men are cast downe, then thou shalt say, there is a lifting up; and he shall save the humble person:* when a man casts down himselfe in a voluntary humiliation, then *God* exalts and lifts him up, but when in a proud presumption he exalts and lifts up himselfe, then GOD dejects and casts them downe; it is a good meditation of Saint *Augustine* upon the words of *David*, *Psal.* 138. 6. *The Lord is on high and hee beholdeth the lowly, as for the proud and hauty he knoweth them a far off: Videte magnum miraculum &c*, see a strange wonder (saith he) *God* sits aloft in heaven, and yet the higher a man lifts up himselfe, the further he is from *God*; the lower a man casts down himselfe, the neerer he is to *God*. I will close up all with that divine *Epiphonema* of holy *Bernard*: *Domine Deus, qui das gratiam humilibus, da gratiam ut simus humiles.* O Lord *God*, thou that giveſt grace to the humble, give us grace to be humbled. And that for Iesus Christ his sake, to whom with thee and the holy Spirit bee given and ascribed all honour and glory, bee done and performed all service and duty, from this time forth for evermore,

Amen, Amen.

(***)

Recensui hanc Librum, cui Titulus est, [A Sermon preached at S. *Pauls* Crosse on Trinity Sunday,] *una cum Epistola nuncupatoria ad dignissimum virum* IOHANNEM MEDE, *Militem, &c. qui quidem liber continet septem folia, in quibus nihil reperio bonis moribus, aut sanæ doctrinæ contrarium, quò minus cum utilitate imprimatur, modo intra tres menses proximè sequentes typis mandetur.*

GULIELMUS BRAY,
Episcopo Londinensi Capellanus domesticus.

Ex ædibus Fulhamiensibus,
Iunii 6. 1632.